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'Customers to help pay for cleanup

BY JANE BROOKS
Staff reporter

A total of 21 customers who took their waste solvents to Chem-Solv Inc. for disposal have agreed to help pay for cleaning up environmental damage caused by an explosion and fire at the Cheswold recycling plant four years ago.

Another 17 firms, identified as "potentially responsible parties" to the pollution, have refused to sign the consent order to study the extent of contamination at the site that was nominated to the national Superfund priority list in January 1987.

The customers, ranging from small businesses to large corporations, the state Transportation Department and Dover Air Force Base, deposited their hazardous wastes with Chem-Solv, a licensed recycling facility, legally and in good faith, but they're still responsible for any subsequent contamination, according to state and federal environmental authorities.

They may have thought its waste disposal was state-of-the-art five or ten years ago, but if we find out in reality it threatened or damaged the environment — particularly if it poses a danger to public health — they can be held responsible," said **Bob Draper**, community relations coordinator with the federal Environmental Protection Agency in Philadelphia.

The "potentially responsible parties" are traced by the EPA through company records and other sources, said Draper. "Our goal is to recover the cost of the cleanup from those who contributed to the problem... without dipping into the Superfund," Draper said.

The 1.5-acre site along U.S. 13 was used as a waste solvent recycling operation by Chem-Solv for two years, beginning in 1982.

After an explosion and fire in September 1984, the state Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control conducted tests which showed surrounding soil and groundwater to be contaminated with several organic solvents.

To stem the threat to local drinking water wells, the state decontaminated the soil at the site by aeration and installed recovery wells to capture contaminated water on site. This groundwater was treated by aeration and discharged to the regional sewer system, according to **William Jamison**, spokesperson for the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental

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Control. One off-site domestic well was replaced.

The department has continued collection and treatment of contaminated groundwater and monitoring of groundwater quality. No additional water supply wells have been affected, according to Jamison.

The state's efforts have cost about \$400,000 to date.

According to the consent agreement, the companies who contributed hazardous waste to the plant will pay for what environmental authorities call a "remedial investigation/feasibility study" to determine the nature and extent of contamination at the Chem-Solv site and propose permanent cleanup alternatives.

Agencies agreeing to pay for the program are: Airco Welding Products; Ametek Inc.; Baltimore Aircoil Co.; Black & Decker Inc.;

Handy & Harman Tube Co. Inc.; Camdel Metals; Delaware Transportation Department; Dover Air Force Base; General Foods Corp.; Georgetown Aircraft Services; Harper-Thiel Inc.; LLC Dover Inc.; L.D. Caulk; Maaco Enterprises Inc.; Eagle Foodservice Equipment for Metal Masters Foodservice Equipment Co.; MFG Justin Tanks Inc.; Chilton Co. for Middle Atlantic Printing Co.; Robinson Chemical Co.; Scott Paper Co.; Irvin F. Simon; Texaco Refining & Marketing Inc.; and W.L. Gore & Associates Inc.

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